

Election Reform Key Terms

Election Equipment

Audit Trail: A paper printout of votes cast, produced by most direct response electronic voting machines, which election officials may use to cross-check electronically tabulated totals. The audit trail is housed in the inner workings of the machine, and may resemble an adding machine tape. Some DREs store the audit trail electronically and provide for connection to an exterior printer if a printout is desired.

Direct Record Electronic Voting Machine (DRE): This type of machine first became popular because it offers new technology that is adaptable for people with disabilities and prevents overvoting. A DRE displays candidates and issues on a screen, then prompts voters to make their selections using touch-screen, push-button or similar devices, or to write-in votes using keyboards. Ballots may be reviewed electronically before they are cast and stored on a memory cartridge, diskette or smart card. Most DREs have the ability to print a record of votes cast (see audit trail). Some groups are also calling for printed versions of ballots which voters may verify (see voter-verified paper trail).

Electronic Voting Machine: An electronic voting machine may be any system that utilizes an electronic component, but the term is typically used to refer to DREs.

e-Voting: This term is frequently used to refer to DREs and other types of electronic voting equipment, but may be misleading as it implies remote access via a computer network or the Internet (e.g. e-mail, e-government, etc.).

Optical Scan System: This system functions like a standardized test -- voters indicate their choices by coloring in small indicators next to candidates' names or issues. The ballot is then fed into a machine which scans it and casts the vote. New ballot-marking technology promises to make these systems disabled-accessible.

Voter-Verified Paper Trail (V-VPT): A printed version of the ballot that voters may view and check for accuracy before their votes are cast. A V-VPT may also be referred to as a voter-verified ballot or voter-verified receipt, but is not to be confused with an audit trail.

General Terms

“Certificate of Error”: This certificate, issued by the county clerk or voter registration office acts to verify a voter's eligibility to vote in their precinct regardless of whether their name appears in the pollbook or not.

Election Assistance Commission (EAC): The bipartisan EAC was created by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 and serves as a national clearinghouse for election administration information and guidelines. In addition to four presidentially appointed commissioners, the EAC includes a Standards Board, made up of state and local election officials, and a Board of Advisors, which includes election experts and representatives of election-related organizations.

Overvoting: Overvoting occurs when a voter votes for more than one candidate or issue for the same office or initiative.

Provisional Ballot: The Help America Vote Act guarantees that anyone who says they are eligible to vote will be given a ballot on Election Day. Provisional ballots are issued to voters who do not appear on the voter registration rolls, but say they are eligible to vote. Provisional ballots are individually examined by election officials to determine whether the voter is eligible to cast a ballot. A voter may contact election officials to find out whether his provisional ballot was counted. Contact information may be obtained from poll workers or posters at the polling place.

Second Chance Voting: Second chance voting provisions are required in The Help America Vote Act of 2002 and provide that voters are notified when their ballots contain errors, and are given a chance to correct them.

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA): HAVA authorizes Congress to provide \$3.86 billion to states and federal agencies for election reforms. The law creates the Election Assistance Commission and expands the federal government's role in elections through mandates, standards and funding.

Undervoting: Undervoting occurs when voters do not make a selection for every category on a ballot